

VZCZCXRO0837

PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH
DE RUEHKO #0423/01 0500138

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 190138Z FEB 08

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1797

INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY

RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY

RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5//

RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI

RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA//

RHMFIUU/USFJ //J5/J021//

RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA

RUAYJAA/CTF 72

RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 8524

RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 6137

RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 9802

RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 4714

RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 6740

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1711

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7781

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TREASURY/OASIA/IMI/JAPAN; DEPT PASS USTR/PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
SECDEF FOR JCS-J-5/JAPAN,
DASD/ISA/EAPR/JAPAN; DEPT PASS ELECTRONICALLY TO USDA
FAS/ITP FOR SCHROETER; PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR;
CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 02/19/08

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- 1) U.S. Secretary of State Rice to arrive in Japan on Feb. 27 for talks on North Korea, Marine incident

ASAHI (Page 2) (Excerpt)
Eve., February 16, 2008

(Washington)

The U.S. State Department announced on Feb. 15 that Secretary Rice will visit the Republic of Korea, China, and Japan between Feb. 23-28, timed to attend the inauguration of Lee Myung Bak as the new president of South Korea. Though there had been speculation that she would possibly visit Pyongyang to accompany a famous American symphony orchestra, the State Department spokesperson on the 15th ruled that out.

Rice will first visit South Korea on the 25th and after the inauguration depart for Beijing on the 26th. She will stay in Japan on the 27th and 28th, meeting Foreign Minister Koumura and other senior officials. She will exchange views on how to deal with the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear issue. The issue of the rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl by a U.S. Marine is likely to come up, as well.

- 2) State Secretary Rice to express "regret" over alleged U.S. Marine rape incident during visit to Japan

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
Evening, February 18, 2008

Miyazaki, Washington

Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia Christopher Hill said yesterday that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would express sincere regret over the alleged rape of a junior high school girl by a U.S. Marine Corps staff sergeant in Okinawa during her meetings with Foreign Minister Koumura and other Japanese officials when she visits Japan starting on Feb. 27. Hill made the remark in response to questions by reporters at an airport in the suburbs of Washington.

Hill said: "Secretary Rice is perplexed over the incident and is taking it with profound regret."

3) Fukuda reveals plan to discuss with Secretary Rice measures to prevent incidents by U.S. Marines

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
February 19, 2008

Speaking before reporters at his official residence (Kantei) last night, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda indicated that he would discuss measures to prevent a recurrence of crimes by U.S. Marines, in reaction to a series of recent incidents by U.S. Marines in Okinawa, with U.S. Secretary of State Rice when she visits Japan on Feb. 27.

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Fukuda said: "What has happened to the U.S. military? I must ask the U.S. to take thorough measures to prevent such incidents." Okinawa Vice Governor Katsuko Asato and others met Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura at the Kantei last evening and called for more preventive measures.

4) Another U.S. Marine arrested in Okinawa, charged with drunk driving at a time when policy of strict official discipline in effect

ASAHI (Page 34) (Full)
February 18, 2008

Okinawa Prefectural police on Feb. 17 arrested Tony Alexander Garcia (22), a U.S. Marine stationed in Okinawa, on the charge of violating the Highway Transportation Law (drunk driving). The suspect reportedly has admitted the charge. The U.S. forces in Japan have promised to enforce strict discipline among military personnel following the incident of a Marine having raped a junior-high school girl. The Marines in Okinawa have stiffened moral leadership training among personnel.

According to the police investigation, Garcia, a little after 7:00 am on Feb. 17, was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol at Chuo 1-Chome in Okinawa City. Reportedly, a police officer spotted his car weaving along the highway after it left Gate 1 of Kadena Air Base. It was moving in the direction of Okinawa City Hall along what is known as Koza Gate Street. Along that road is the place where the Marine who allegedly raped a school girl first spoke to her.

5) U.S. Marine arrested on suspicion of trespassing in Nago despite tightened military discipline

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Full)
Evening, February 18, 2008

Around 4:25 a.m., February 18, a police station received a call from a 54-year-old woman of Henoko, Nago City, Okinawa Prefecture, saying, "An unknown foreigner is sleeping in my house." Nago Police Station officers rushed to her house and found Shawn Jake, a 21-year-old U.S. Marine Corps corporal based at Camp Schwab, sleeping there. He was arrested on the spot on suspicion of for trespassing. In the wake of an alleged sexual assault of a middle school girl by a U.S. Marine on Feb. 10, U.S. forces in Japan are endeavoring to tighten military discipline and prevent a recurrence of similar incidents. Earlier on Feb. 17, a 22-year-old Marine was arrested in Okinawa City on suspicion of drunk driving. The series of incidents involving U.S. servicemen is likely to draw greater fire from people in Okinawa.

Jake has denied the charge to investigators, saying he did not remember why he entered the house because he was intoxicated at the time. No damage, such as vandalism to the house, has been confirmed.

Camp Schwab sits on the east side of the residential Henoko district. The Defense Ministry is pushing ahead with procedures for conducting an environmental impact assessment at around Camp Schwab, the relocation site for Futenma Air Station. The residential area including the house in question is only some 600 meters away from the Camp Schwab No. 1 gate.

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Suzuyo Takasato, co-representative of the Okinawa Women Act against Military Violence commented: "Although (the U.S. military) says that it is enforcing tighter discipline, the incident showed that service members lack discipline. The situation is intolerable."

6) Fukuda expresses displeasure about series of arrests of U.S. servicemen

MAINICHI (Page 31) (Full)
February 19, 2008

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda last night expressed displeasure regarding the fact that U.S. Marines in Okinawa have been arrested one after another even after the alleged rape of a middle school girl by a U.S. Marine (on Feb. 10). The prime minister said: "What has happened? (The arrests) occurred right after the U.S. military pledged to enforce tighter discipline." He also indicated that he would file a protest with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice when she visits Japan later this month, saying: "We must strongly call on (the United States) to take measures so that such incidents will not occur again."

7) Prime minister to call for stricter discipline from U.S. forces

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
February 2, 2008

Commenting on a series of crimes committed by U.S. Marines in Okinawa, Prime Minister Fukuda on the evening of Feb. 18 expressed his intention to strongly call on the U.S. to prevent a recurrence. He noted, "What has happened to the U.S. military? There must be some reason. We must make a strict request to the U.S., by determining the reasons." Concerning U.S. Secretary of State Rice's visit to Japan on Feb. 27, he indicated his intention to bring up this issue during a meeting with her, noting, "I must consult with her on the matter so that such incidents will not happen again."

Okinawa Prefecture Vice Governor Katsuko Asato and a group of members of the Okinawa Prefecture Assembly on Feb. 18 visited Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura and urged him to reveal a stricter education plan for U.S. servicemen and effective measures for preventing a recurrence. Machimura replied, "The government has asked the U.S. Embassy, dedicating all its strength." Regarding a revision to requirements for off-base residency by U.S. service members, he said, "We must consider a realistic approach, by checking every single requirement."

8) Chief cabinet secretary on series of crimes by Marines: "U.S. military in Okinawa is slackening"

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
February 18, 2008

Following an alleged schoolgirl rape incident in Okinawa a week ago, two more U.S. Marine Corps corporals were arrested on Feb. 17 and 18 on suspicion of drunken driving and breaking into a house, respectively. Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura expressed anger over the series of crimes by U.S. Marine Corps members in a press conference this morning. He said:

"When (the rape incident) is eliciting much criticism, more members

violated the law. 'Slackening off' is the only word for what I feel. I urge (the U.S. military) to deeply reflect on its approach. I feel it was truly regrettable and I am enraged by the incidents."

Machimura then indicated that he would seek strict enforcement of discipline by the U.S. military of its personnel, saying: "We must urge the U.S. government to carry out serious reflection."

9) Foreign Ministry asks U.S. for measures to stop crimes by Marines

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
Evening, February 18, 2008

Two more U.S. Marine Corps members were arrested on suspicion of drunken driving and breaking into a house, following an alleged rape by a Marine of a schoolgirl in Okinawa. Foreign Ministry North American Affairs Bureau Director General Shinichi Nishimiya made a phone call to DCM Donovan this morning and strongly sought that the U.S. government take more perfect measures to prevent a recurrence of incidents, saying: "We have asked the U.S. for strict enforcement of discipline and more preventive measures following the rape case. Despite our request, more Marines were arrested. It is truly regrettable."

Donovan replied: "The incidents are indeed regrettable. The U.S. will fully cooperate with the Japanese investigations, as well as review our preventive measures."

10) Government files protest with U.S. over series of incidents involving Marines

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 19, 2008

Foreign Ministry Vice Minister Misoji Yabunaka made a phone call to U.S. Ambassador Thomas Schieffer yesterday and filed a protest against a series of recent crimes committed by U.S. Marines in Okinawa. The Ambassador replied: "The incidents are indeed regrettable. The U.S. will earnestly step up measures to prevent a recurrence."

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda told reporters yesterday: "What has happened to the U.S. military? Investigations must be fully conducted, and we must ask the U.S. to take full measures to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents."

11) Rape of schoolgirl by U.S. serviceman in Okinawa: Vice governor calls on Kantei to ask for measures to prevent recurrence

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
February 19, 2008

Following the alleged rape of a middle school girl by a U.S. Marine in Okinawa, Vice Okinawa Governor Katsuko Asato of the Council for Promotion of Dezoning and Reutilization of Military Land in Okinawa, established by local governments hosting U.S. military bases in Okinawa, and others on Feb. 18 visited Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura at the Kantei and called on the government to take steps to prevent a recurrence. Machimura indicated the government's plan to consider measures on U.S. service members living off base.

Concerning arrests of U.S. service members on suspicion of violating the traffic law (driving under the influence of alcohol) and trespassing, Vice Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka on the 18th expressed his dismay to U.S. Ambassador to Japan Schieffer. The Ambassador indicated his intention to speed up efforts to take measures to prevent a recurrence.

12) Tokyo, Washington to expedite review of preventive measures in wake of series of crimes by U.S. service members

A series of scandals involving U.S. Marines in Okinawa has continued even after the alleged sexual assault against a middle school girl by a U.S. Marine (on Feb. 10). Given the situation, the government plans to strongly protest the matter to the United States, with Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura saying, "The United States must enforce tight military discipline." The government also wants to speedily come up with preventive measures in cooperation with the United States.

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda at his official residence last night said to the press: "What has happened to the U.S. military? In the wake of a serious incident, the U.S. military just recently declared that it would enforce tighter discipline. We must strongly call on the United States to find out the cause and make efforts to prevent a recurrence."

Vice Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka yesterday afternoon called U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer and filed a protest against the string of incidents and called for a speedy review of preventive measures at the same time. In response, Ambassador Schieffer pledged to expedite the review work, expressing his regret.

Meanwhile, a group of Okinawa municipal leaders, including Deputy Governor Katsuko Asato and Kin Mayor Tsuyoshi Gibu, yesterday called on Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura and Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba. They requested: (1) apologies and compensation to victims and their families by the U.S. military, (2) enforcement of tighter military discipline and human rights education and a decision on effective preventive measures, (3) reduction in U.S. troop strength, and (4) fundamental review of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement.

Machimura indicated the government would study such steps as enhancing patrols in entertainment districts and surveying the situation of U.S. service members living off base.

13) In wake of alleged rape, anger is spreading among U.S. service members in Okinawa

MAINICHI (Page 31) (Abridged slightly)
Pak Chon Ju, February 18, 2008

This is the first weekend since the alleged rape occurred on February 10. I walked around the entertainment district in Okinawa City where Tyron Hadnott, a 34-year-old U.S. Marine staff sergeant, had offered a ride home to the victim, a 14-year-old middle school girl. U.S. service members I met in the district all expressed anger, saying that he did a terrible thing and made them angry.

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Shortly after 10:00 p.m., Feb. 15, I came to the so-called gate street connecting a Kadena Air Base gate to the entertainment district lined with bars and clubs crowded with U.S. service members. At one bar, I approached a group of two U.S. servicemen and two Japanese women. One of them, a 22-year-old airman, started to talk to me. "The Air Force and the Marines are separate forces. The Air Force is more gentlemanly than the Army, Navy, and Marines. The Air Force is the hardest one to get into," he said as if to tell me that no one in the Air Force would do such a thing. He went on angrily: "What is most important to USFJ is friendship with Japan. (Tyron Hadnott) did a stupid thing."

As I returned to the street, I found a group of U.S. service members. One of them, a 23-year-old Marine, said: "After the incident, I was told by my commanding officer not to do anything that would attract attention in town. All my colleagues are now angry."

A 32-year-old Marine walking down the street with a woman also said: "Because he assaulted a girl much younger than him, he should

appropriately pay for what he did. No one on the base has any sympathy toward him."

14) Local residents express concern over incidents caused by U.S. Marines in Okinawa

MAINICHI (Page 10) (Full)
Eve., February 18, 2008

Junichiro Nagasawa, Seiichi Ota

Shawn Jake (21), a U.S. Marine Corps corporal belonging to the U.S. Marine Corps' Camp Schwab, broke into a house in Nago City's Henoko district, to which the U.S. military's Futenma Air Station is planned to be relocated. The Henoko district is a village lying next to Camp Schwab. The residents in the area are divided over the Futenma relocation plan, but with the occurrence of this illegal entry, residents began expressing concern about the relocation, with one resident saying, "More problems are likely to occur if the base is relocated." Critical views are being voiced among Okinawa residents about the succession of incidents committed by U.S. military personnel.

When six hours had passed after the incident, the Henoko district was quiet as usual.

A 75-year-old man living near a restaurant that is patronized by U.S. Marines said with disgust: "It's outrageous. It was just recently that an alleged rape of a junior high schoolgirl by a U.S. Marine occurred." The man continued: "If the base is relocated here, we will face more problems. I am opposed to the relocation plan."

A man in his sixties who claimed that drunk U.S. Marines once broke into his friend's house said: "Such a thing is impermissible. Strengthened discipline is of no use once military personnel drink. . . . We tell each other we need to lock our doors because non-residents are coming here because of the base relocation issue."

A housewife in her sixties said: "Some residents say that if the base is relocated, the economy will thrive, but we may face more

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problems if the number of foreigners living in this district increases."

15) Okinawa prefectural police chief negative about joint Japan-U.S. patrols

MAINICHI (Page 31) (Full)
February 19, 2008

The Japanese government is considering Japan-U.S. joint patrols as a means to prevent crimes by U.S. service members. Okinawa Prefectural Police chief Hachiro Tokutsu yesterday took a negative view about such a plan, saying: "It would pose problems from the viewpoint of taking custody of suspects." Tokutsu pointed out the possibility of the U.S. side seizing suspects ahead of Japan and the country not being able to conduct investigations independently as a result of joint patrols by the prefectural police and U.S. military police.

16) U.S. to strengthen discipline among military personnel in response to recent alleged rape case

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 16, 2008

Yoshihisa Komori, Washington

The U.S. Department of Defense's spokesperson Upton on Feb. 14 expressed regrets over the recent alleged rape of a junior high schoolgirl by a U.S. Marine in Okinawa and revealed that orders were given to strengthen ethical rules and discipline among the entire U.S. military personnel in Japan.

Upton noted that the U.S. military authorities firmly retain the

policy of not being tolerant of any sexual assault by officers and soldiers, and that they have taken the recent incident seriously. The spokesperson also stated, "It is highly regrettable that this kind of incident occurred. We sincerely sympathize with the victim, her family, and other persons concerned." Meanwhile, Upton noted, "The Marine in question is considered to be innocent until proved guilty. So, it is inappropriate to conjecture at this point in time the results of the ongoing investigations."

Upton went on to say, "We are fully cooperating with the Japanese authorities so that a fair judgment will be given after the investigations are completed. As a set of measures to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents, Upton declared that: (1) the commander of the U.S. Forces Japan established a special team to verify whether training and educational programs are implemented toward all U.S. military personnel stationed in Japan, and (2) the commander of the U.S. Marine Corps in Japan gave orders for ethical rules, discipline and education intended for all officers and soldiers under his command to be reviewed on Feb. 13-15.

At a meeting on Feb. 15 of the Lower House Budget Committee, Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura noted, "I think it is necessary for both sides to discuss at such fora as the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee how many and what kinds of military personnel live off-base." The Marine who has been arrested resided outside the base. The Japanese government did not know how many military personnel live off-base, but in response to the recent incident, it has asked the U.S. side to survey how many live off-base.

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17) Okinawa rape incident: Stricter requirements for off-the-base residency: Measures to prevent recurrence to be mapped out next week

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)
February 16, 2008

Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura on Feb. 15 revealed a plan to outline within next week measures to prevent a recurrence of the incident of a U.S. Marine stationed in Okinawa raping a middle schoolgirl. Since the incident was caused by a staff sergeant living off the base, the planned set of measures will likely focus on the adoption of stricter requirements for allowing U.S. servicemen to live off the base.

Koumura told reporters at the Foreign Ministry, "The incident this time was caused by a relatively elder person who lives off the base." As possible measures, Koumura cited the adoption of stricter requirements for allowing off-the-base residency and the installation of security cameras.

According to the Foreign Ministry, 5,107 U.S. servicemen have entered into contracts for rental housing for U.S. soldiers in Okinawa. The number is more than 20 PERCENT of the entire U.S. servicemen living in Okinawa. However, the members of those households have not been revealed. Requirements for allowing off-the-base residency have not been revealed, either.

18) Government decides to end freeze on subsidy to Iwakuni, following election of candidate approving relocation of U.S. fighter jets as mayor

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
February 16, 2008

The government on Feb. 15 decided to offer to Iwakuni City, Yamaguchi Prefecture, about 3.5 billion yen in a subsidy by raising the grant rate set under the existing law in place of the now frozen subsidy for the construction of a new town hall. Regarding the reason for raising the grant rate, the Defense Ministry explained, "Iwakuni's own circumstances have been taken into account." Offering a subsidy in this manner is apparently the establishment of a new subsidy system. This is a measure in response to the replacement of the previous mayor, who was against the relocation of a U.S. Navy air wing to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni (MCAS), by a new mayor

who is in favor of the transfer.

New Mayor Yoshihiko Fukuda on Feb. 15 visited Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura at the Prime Minister's Official

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Residence (Kantei). He made a request to Machimura, "We would like to receive a subsidy for the construction of a new town hall promptly." Machimura replied, "We will facilitate the procedures without delay." The government will approve the offering of the subsidy as soon as the city officially announces its approval for the jet relocation plan.

The subsidy for the construction of an Iwakuni city hall is the return for the city accepting the transfer of air-refueling aircraft from U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan City, Okinawa, which was decided in the final report issued in 1996 by the Japan-U.S. Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO). The offering of the subsidy has been put on hold with former Mayor Katsusuke

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Ihara opposing the partial change made to the air-refueling aircraft relocation plan following the 2006 USFJ realignment talks and the decision on the transfer of a carrier-borne jet unit after the city decided to accept the air-refueling aircraft transfer plan.

19) High-level government official hints at possible dispatch of SDF to PKO in Middle East

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)
February 17, 2008

A high-level government official on Feb. 16 referred to the government's move to study a dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), a UN peacekeeping operation (PKO), and in this connection, the official indicated that Japan is also mulling a dispatch of the SDF to the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) deployed in the Middle East. This official continued: "Participation in UNMIS is among plans we are considering. We also are considering dispatching the Japan Coast Guard to East Timor. Likewise, we may dispatch personnel to the Sinai Peninsula."

UNTSO is a long-running PKO that began in 1948. It is deployed in Egypt and Israel on the Sinai Peninsula. As of the end of last September, 151 military monitoring personnel were taking part in UNTSO.

According to the Foreign Ministry, UNTSO is highly likely to meet the five principles for the SDF's participation in a PKO as stipulated in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations Law.

20) Japan mulling dispatching SDF to Sudan for PKO

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
February 16, 2008

The government yesterday started to consider dispatching the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) deployed in the southern part of that country. This group is operating separately from the other peacekeeping operation going on in Darfur in the west of that country. The duties of the SDF personnel Japan assumes includes confirming whether the peace agreement is implemented and helping to remove land mines.

In the south of Sudan, a fierce civil war continued between the government backed mainly by Muslims living in the northern region and the anti-government group based in the southern region, most of the population of which were Christians, since 1983 through 2005, when a peace agreement was reached.

As of last August, the Group of Eight industrialized nations excluding Japan, China, and South Korea sent troops to UNMIS. UNMIS now consists of 660 civilian police officers and 607 military monitoring personnel. As a result of discussion held so far, Japan has now concluded that the SDF's participation in UNMIS meets the

five principles stipulated under the UN Peacekeeping Operations Law.

21) Former high-level U.S. official to visit Pyongyang on nuclear issue

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)

TOKYO 00000423 011 OF 014

February 17, 2008

Takashi Arimoto, Washington

Former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Gregg on Feb. 15 revealed to the Sankei Shimbun that he, along with former Secretary of Defense Perry, will travel to Pyongyang accompanying the New York Philharmonic, and that on that occasion, he will meet with North Korean officials and prod them to swiftly declare their nuclear programs, an action that has fallen behind schedule.

According to Gregg, he plans to meet with Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan, the North Korean chief negotiator in the six-party talks, but this plan has not been officially confirmed. Gregg explained: "I intend to urge the North Korean officials I will meet to move the Korean Peninsula denuclearization process forward."

Gregg will convey the results of the meeting with North Korean officials to Assistant Secretary of State Hill, America's chief delegate to the six-party talks.

The New York Philharmonic will give its first performance in Pyongyang on Feb. 26 at the request of North Korea. A/S Hill actively worked to realize this performance in the belief that it would help improve relations between the United States and North Korea. The six-party talks have been suspended because of a conflict between Washington and Pyongyang over the specifics of a nuclear declaration by North Korea. The U.S. has high hopes that the New York Philharmonic's performance will serve as a breakthrough in the stalled multilateral talks.

Meanwhile, State Department spokesman McCormack told a press briefing on Feb. 15 that Secretary of State Rice will travel to three Asian countries, including Japan, starting on Feb. 23. Specifically, Rice will travel to China and Japan to discuss a resumption of the six-party talks after attending South Korean President-elect Lee Myung Bak's inauguration in Seoul on Feb. 25.

Rice will stay in Japan on Feb. 27-28 and meet with Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura and other Japanese officials. They are likely to confer on the North Korean issue and the recent alleged rape of a junior high school girl by a U.S. Marine in Okinawa. Ahead of Rice's visit to Japan and China, A/S Hill will travel to Japan, China, and South Korea starting on Feb. 18.

22) Parliamentary league for promoting exchange with North Korea with involvement of DPJ lawmakers to be launched possibly on Feb. 22

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
February 19, 2008

A Korean Peninsula Issues Study Council (tentative name), a parliamentary league consisting of lawmakers from the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) and others, will be launched possibly on Feb. 22. The council will advocate settling the abduction, nuclear, and missile issues and normalizing ties with that nation through the promotion of broad-based exchange. Founders of the organization are 14 DPJ Upper House members, including Yoshihiro Kawakami, Keiko Chiba, Yasuo Yamashita and Yoshiro Yokomine, and Upper House member Shozaburo Jimi of the People's New Party (PNP).

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The charter of the council notes that it would go against the national interest to normalize ties with North Korea based on the Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Declaration, and that it is not desirable to leave unattended the present situation in which there is no direct dialogue between the two countries. It makes a clear distinction from the suprapartisan Parliamentary Group on the Abduction Issue, chaired by Takeo Hiranuma, which intends to press North Korea to settle the abduction issue in a hard-line manner. For this reason, some DPJ members are alert to the move, with one noting, "Mr. Kawakami has a channel with North Korea, as he visited that nation before he was elected as a lawmaker. The council might tilt toward a stance of reconciling with North Korea."

23) Poll: Fukuda cabinet' nonsupport rate tops 40 PERCENT for 1st time

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
February 16, 2008

According to a Jiji Press opinion poll conducted for the month on Feb. 8-11, the rate of public support for Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's cabinet was 32.5 PERCENT, down 2.0 percentage points from last month. The Fukuda cabinet's support rate dropped for the fourth month in a row. The nonsupport rate was 43.2 PERCENT, up 3.4 points from last month. The nonsupport rate topped the support rate for the first time since the Fukuda cabinet came into office in September last year.

Fukuda has launched advisory panels to discuss social security measures and push for consumer-oriented policy measures but could not stop his cabinet's support rate from falling.

Those who do not support the Fukuda cabinet were asked to pick one or more reasons. In response to this question, "nothing can be expected" accounted for nearly 30 PERCENT, followed by "no leadership" at 17.4 PERCENT and "poor policies" at 10.4 PERCENT.

Among those in their 50s, the Fukuda cabinet's nonsupport rate showed a substantial increase of 8.5 points from last month and topped 50 PERCENT for the first time. Among those in their 30s and 40s as well, the nonsupport rate topped 40 PERCENT. Meanwhile, among those in their 20s, the support rate was only over 10 PERCENT. Among those aged 70 and over, the support rate was over 50 PERCENT. Among those in their 60s as well, the support rate was over 40 PERCENT. As seen from these figures, the support rate varied with generations.

24) Poll: Cabinet support down to 40 PERCENT

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
February 18, 2008

The Nihon Keizai Shimbun conducted a public opinion survey on Feb. 15-17, in which the rate of public support for Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and his cabinet was 40 PERCENT, down 2 percentage points from the last survey conducted in January. The nonsupport rate for the Fukuda cabinet was 48 PERCENT, up 2 points. The Fukuda cabinet's disapproval rating topped its approval rating for the third straight month. Fukuda is now seen as lacking in leadership. Moreover, the public gives low ratings for his cabinet's way of handling road-related tax revenues and its policy measures to

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revitalize the nation's economy.

Those who do not support the Fukuda cabinet were asked to pick one or more reasons. To this question, "no leadership" accounted for 57 PERCENT, topping all other answers. This answer marked the highest percentage for Fukuda since his cabinet came into office, even higher than 54 PERCENT for the former Abe cabinet at its last stage in August last year. Among other answers, "poor policies" accounted for 31 PERCENT, followed by "unstable" at 25 PERCENT. Among those who support the Fukuda cabinet, "trustworthy" accounted for 43 PERCENT. Affirmative answers for the Fukuda cabinet's job performance totaled 31 PERCENT, down 3 points from last month, hitting a low for the Fukuda cabinet since its inauguration.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party stood at 39 PERCENT, up 3 points from the last survey. The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) was at 31 PERCENT, up 1 point. The gap between the two parties' support rates have widened to 8 points from 6 points in the last survey.

The survey was taken by Nikkei Research Inc. over the telephone on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, samples were chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over across the nation. A total of 1,530 households with one or more eligible voters were sampled, and answers were obtained from 919 persons (60.1 PERCENT).

25) Poll: Fukuda cabinet's nonsupport rate reaches 51 PERCENT ; Support down to 39 PERCENT

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Abridged)
February 19, 2008

The approval rating for Prime Minister Fukuda and his cabinet fell 6.9 percentage points from January to 38.7 PERCENT in a face-to-face nationwide public opinion survey conducted by the Yomiuri Shimbun on Feb. 16-17. The disapproval rating for the Fukuda cabinet was 50.8 PERCENT, up 9.2 points. The Fukuda cabinet's nonsupport rate topped its support rate for the first time since it came into office.

In the survey, those who answered that they did not support the Fukuda cabinet were asked to pick up to two reasons. In response, 48 PERCENT answered that they could not appreciate its political stance, topping all other answers, with 37 PERCENT saying nothing can be expected of its economic policy and 28 PERCENT each saying the prime minister is untrustworthy or his cabinet is unstable.

Respondents were also asked what they would like the Fukuda cabinet to pursue on a priority basis. In response to this question for multiple answers, "food safety" scored 40 PERCENT, up 16 points from the January survey. Respondents were further asked if they thought the Fukuda cabinet has appropriately met recent changes in the economic situation. To this question, a total of 75 PERCENT answered "no." Public frustration is growing stronger over issues related to their daily lives, such as poisoning from frozen Chinese-made "gyoza" dumplings and price increases for various goods and services. This seems to have brought about the drop in the support rate.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the ruling
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Liberal Democratic Party stood at 32.6 PERCENT, down 2.9 points from the January survey. The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) was at 20.0 PERCENT, up 3.1 points.

SCHIEFFER